



Thirty-Eighth Edition

March 2003

The *MASTER COMPOSTER* Program of Arlington is in partnership with Texas to dramatically decrease yard and household waste going to landfills by inspiring and educating our citizens to reduce, recycle, and reuse.

Welcome, Interns!

We'd like to welcome our 2003 Master Composter Interns. They completed their classroom hours on February 15 and 22, 2003 and are ready to start volunteering. Congratulations to: Baltazar Aguirre, Cris Aguirre, Joe Brandt, Vicki

Dixon, Karen Goldman, Angela Grier, Stephen Haydon, Marilyn Martinelli, Stephen Marx, Zelta Nanney, Connie Nolen, Sally Olson, Frances Presson, John Presson, Don Smerlis, Cindy Thomas, Helena Van Heiningen, and Kathie Wegner.

Wormshop

We look forward to meeting all of our 2003 Master Composter Interns. To make these newcomers feel really welcome, we are



hosting our 5th annual "Wormshop" at our general membership meeting in March.

Once again, we will give away free worms to all Master Composters in need of worms. This is the perfect opportunity for all Master

Composters (old and new) to get your hands on some of those good old red wigglers.

We'll provide the worms and everything else you need to start a worm bin. All you need to bring is a bin or container. (A small Rubbermaid tub with a lid works well – we recommend something that will fit "under the kitchen sink.")

We'll teach you how to properly prepare a worm bin. You'll get hands-on instruction from one of our fellow Master Composters and worm expert, **Mr. Hugh Ross**, and you will go home with a living, working worm bin. Hope to see you there.

Wormshop:

**7:00 pm, Thursday, March 13, 2003
Municipal Office Tower (Frost Bank)
201 E. Abram Street, 2nd Floor**

**Please park and enter the building from the north.
B.Y.O.B. (bring your own bin)**

A unique volunteer opportunity

Need volunteer hours? Unable to attend our Saturday work days? Got a computer?

We are looking for someone to create a data base of e-mail addresses for the Arlington Master Composters.

If you are interested in working on this project, please contact Lorrie Anderle at 817-459-6778 or at anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us

2003 Earth Fest Cancelled

A message from the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department

As you may be aware, the City of Arlington is currently facing significant fiscal and budgetary difficulties. In light of this situation, the City has decided to cancel Earth Fest 2003 in an effort to focus all of its resources on core service delivery. As this may come as no surprise with the current economic state of our country, we deeply regret having to make this tough decision.

Leaf Recycling Project

During the months of November 2002 through February 2003, the City of Arlington conducted a pilot leaf recycling program. Three drop off sites were designated for drop off of leaves. During this time, Arlington residents dropped off 90 tons of leaves for recycling. Due to the success of the program, the City is considering next year's program to include additional drop off sites.

This year's leaves will be mulched and blended with the Christmas trees, and given away to the public free of charge at the Landfill.

Specific dates have not yet been released, but we'll keep you posted.



CALENDAR of Events

March 13

"Wormshop" at General Membership Meeting

April 5

Two-hour class and Work day at Veteran's Park from 9 to 11 am

April 12

Two-hour class and Work day at River Legacy Living Science Center from 9 to 11 am

April 26
Arlington Council of Garden Clubs 39th Annual Flower Show

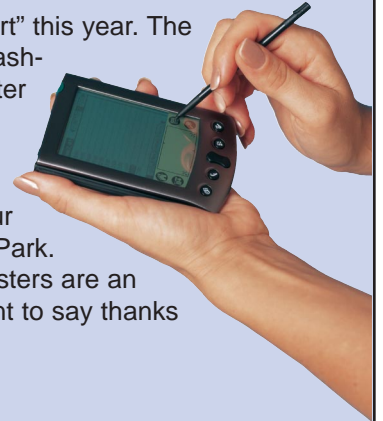


A message from the backyard compost program coordinator

Although I was disappointed that the City had to cancel Earth Fest 2003, I understand why we had to do it. The City is experiencing difficult times right now. I am very thankful I have a job and that I have the Arlington Master Composters to work with.

We are "off to a good start" this year. The Yardwise classes were a smashing success, our annual Master Composter class in February was well-attended by a very enthusiastic group, and there is much enthusiasm about our newest venture at Veteran's Park. The Arlington Master Composters are an amazing group and I just want to say thanks for your support.

— Lorrie Anderle



Compost Chat and Chew by Jane Borland

Hello fellow composters and a big compost size (3 ft. x 3ft. x 3 ft.) welcome to all of our new Master Composters in training from our February class. What a great group of folks Jackie and I have gotten to know! You are going to love them!

I thought I would share a few things with you that came up during our two Saturday classes. First, we were having a discussion about using hair in a compost pile as a nitrogen source. One of our new members who is an expert in septic tanks commented that hair just does not break down in a septic tank, so he was surprised that we would list it as a possible nitrogen source for our piles. Putting our heads together, we decided that the reason it will break down in a compost pile but not in a septic tank is due to a lack of oxygen and thereby a lack of aerobic bacteria in the septic tank to do the work. If anyone else has other thoughts, please share them with us.

Secondly, we were discussing the age-old grocery store question of "Paper or Plastic"? Truthfully, the best answer is neither. You should take your own canvass bags with you. One kink to the answer for this question is that although many of the local grocery stores have bins out for you to "recycle" your plastic bags, my students who work at these stores tell me that they throw them in the trash at the end of the day. Lorrie, however, says that Walmart does recycle their bags. With regard to paper sacks, we discussed the fact that the paper can be recycled, but another of our new members educated us about the fact that paper sacks for groceries must be made from virgin timber due to strength requirements for the bags. They cannot be made from recycled paper. So... take your own bags to the store with you!

Another one of our new members is an art teacher and friend of mine at Lamar High School. She says that art teachers are always in need of small bottles with caps, like medicine bottles or



film canisters. They put small amounts of paint in them at a time for student use. If you would be so kind as to save these types of containers and bring them on Saturday mornings or to monthly meetings, I will make sure they get to her.

For all of you new folks that helped build the pile at River Legacy at the conclusion of our class, I know you are anxious to know how hot it got. Well.....we built the pile on Saturday afternoon. Then came Monday with the start of ice and snow and a deep winter freeze keeping us all at home in our warm houses for two or three days. To say our pile lost some of its heat to the environment would be an understatement. Some of us did meet at River Legacy the next Saturday to find the pile at the temperature of 80°F. Who knows how hot it was earlier in the week, but it had gone down in size, so we turned the pile and added more nitrogen (bat guano and cotton seed meal) to try to give it another boost. Don't feel badly that the pile was not super hot. I don't know any of us who could have had a really hot pile without grass during weather conditions like we had last week.

A final note – we are now in T – 4 years and counting until our Arlington landfill will be full. The city is seeking permission to raise the height of the landfill to increase its longevity, but it takes about 3 years to get the approval. In the meantime, remember that 87 percent of the materials that you use on a daily basis could be composted, recycled, or reused. The hazardous materials need to be taken to the Hazardous Waste Facility on Bridge Street in Ft. Worth. Remember that they charge the City of Arlington \$75 for each load, no matter how big or how small, so if you are making a trip, ask your neighbors if they have anything to send while you go. Remember, too, that they are only open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. You don't want to load the wastes in your car on Sunday and then have to drive around with them for several days before unloading.

That's enough for now. Again, welcome to all of our new Master Composter Volunteers. We look forward to working and visiting with you. Until next time, happy composting and bring on the spring weather.

— Jane Borland

Our First Workday at Veterans Park

by John Darling

March came in like a cold, irritated lion, but that didn't faze the faithful. A hardcore handful of native plant enthusiasts grubbed in the dirt on their usual first Saturday Workday, even as a brand-new thing happened: we held our first Master Composter workday at the Wildscape compost demonstration site. The weather didn't matter to Lorrie Anderle and 15 (very) assorted Master Composters and Interns who showed up. Regulars Greg Gordan, Cyndi Ives, and Stephen Ives were joined by Nancy Hagwood, Charlie Shiner, Stan Salpeter, Ray Buckingham, Ginny Buckingham, and Stephen Smith. And our latest Interns worked too: Joe Brandt, Frances Presson, John Presson, Karen Goldman, and Kathie Wegner felt the thrill of getting wet on purpose on a wintry day. Or were smart enough to stay clear of the hose and find something dry to work on.

We turned six piles and built two new ones. All the established piles were pretty cool but the week before a couple were around 100 degrees. (Honest. Stephen Ives has been keeping track with some kind of electronic gizmo.)

Well, you may ask, why were we fooling around at this foreign park? There's nothing wrong with River Legacy and plenty to do there.

There's a perfectly good answer, of course: we were taking the first step toward a major facelift for this site. We tore down the gently decomposing pallet bins in preparation for installing some sort of attractive structure that will hide leaf bags, provide protected storage, and support educational displays. Something vaguely like the edifice at River Legacy, but less grand.

There was a downside to our dismantling: suddenly all our accumulated junk and leaf bags were exposed to very public view. (Unlike the River Legacy site we have lots of passersby and many have an excessively developed esthetic sense. We've learned that someone is always eager to complain to the Parks Department about every little thing, so a mini-mountain of bags just won't do.) Therefore we had to use up all the bags and we built a couple of piles that we weren't exactly planning on.

Lorrie looked it all over and immediately came up with several good ideas for improvements that will help esthetically and functionally. And that's a good thing because function is very big at this site: Arlington Conservation Council people, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Native Plant Society and Arlington Organic Garden Club members who work here seem uniformly desperate for compost. The Molly Hollar Wildscape (recently named for its spiritual leader) is over three acres of relatively natural park that volunteers are restoring and enhancing with native plants and organic methods. It would be hard to find a better spot for a compost site

or a place where the finished product is more appreciated. As you might suspect, it's tough to make enough compost for all the planting projects in three acres, and that's why the facelift includes ways to increase production.

One example of the need for compost here is seedballs. Volunteers have been making hundreds of little balls of soil, seeds and sifted compost (Yes, Jane Borland, sifted compost). These creations are a great activity for kids who are drawn to their innate mudness, but their real function is to protect the seeds from birds and insects until a good rain sort of melts them and gives the seeds a start on germination. At the Wildscape, seedballs are now being used to restore a miniature grassy area (a pocket prairie once typical of undisturbed Eastern Cross Timbers). The seeds for this project include appropriate pioneer prairie species like partridge pea, cowpen daisy, gayfeather, and purpletop grass. Volunteers have already made about 600 seedballs. At an application rate of 10 to 20 balls per square yard, that's enough for 30 to 60 square yards, which must include a big portion of the prairie.

Our first workday at Veterans Park seemed to be a success, and we're looking forward to seeing some of the composters back again on any Saturday. Veterans Park might be more convenient for some of us to reach, and there's plenty to do, especially as we progress with

improvements. And we're looking forward to starting regular 2-hour composting classes here beginning April 5. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard.



Volunteers Needed...

... For the Arlington Council of Garden Clubs 39th Annual Flower Show.

On Saturday, April 26th from 10 am to 4 pm, the Arlington Council of Garden Clubs will be hosting its 39th Annual Flower Show at the Fielder House Museum located at 1616 W Abram Street at the corner of Abram and Fielder.



Guest speakers at the event will cover topics such as vegetable gardening, attracting wildlife, and English gardening Texas style. Other activities include a plant sale, pottery demonstrations and a backyard composting demonstration.

This is where we come in..... The backyard compost demonstration is scheduled for 11:15. We need several folks to volunteer; one to teach and two or three to help demonstrate proper composting techniques. The City will provide free books to give away and the Fielder House already has a compost bin, but we need volunteers to bring bags of leaves and grass and a hayfork.

**If you are interested in helping,
please contact Lorrie Anderle at 817-459-6778
or at anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us.**

**For more information about the event
log on to www.fielderhouse.org**



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